AHMA SUMMARY OF 2025 POINT IN TIME COUNT DATA ON HOMELESSNESS IN B.C.

October 2025

Background:

Point in Time (PIT) Counts are a measure of the number of homeless people on a specific day. This type of counting is known as "taking a snapshot" of the situation. The majority of PIT counts are coordinated by the Homelessness Services Association of BC and BC Housing's Research Centre in collaboration with different partners. Notably, in 2025, HSABC partnered with BCAAFC for the PiT Count, resulting in significantly more Indigenous-specific data for many communities.

From October to April 2025, a number of PIT counts were undertaken across the province. This briefing note includes our preliminary analysis of public PiT count data across the province. All summary data is also included in AHMA's data tools, including the PiT Count Data Dashboard and the upcoming Indigenous Housing Needs Assessment Tool (IHNAT).

2025 Preliminary Data Analysis:[1]

- **Indigenous people are still vastly overrepresented in homeless populations province-wide**
  - In Greater Vancouver's 2025 count, 34% of those experiencing homelessness identified as Indigenous. This is a proportion virtually unchanged from 2023 and consistent with counts since 2005.
  - Smaller communities show even higher Indigenous representation: in Prince Rupert, in 2025 83% of respondents were Indigenous (down from 88% in 2023), and Smithers reported 84%.
  - Many other municipalities had a majority or near-majority Indigenous respondents, although many of these had decreased from the last count: Campbell River 58%, Dawson Creek 56% (down from 66% in 2023), Port Alberni 49% (down from 66% in 2023), Williams Lake 76%, Kitimat 64% (down from 76% in 2023), Merritt 67%.

- **Distinction-based data from 2025 reveal that most Indigenous respondents identify as First Nations, but there are notable Métis populations in some areas.**
  - Cranbrook's Indigenous respondents were 63% First Nations and 37% Métis, and Penticton similarly had 32% of its Indigenous respondents identify as Métis in 2025. Comox Valley and Vernon also had sizable Métis representation (~27% of Indigenous respondents).
  - In contrast, communities like Prince Rupert (~100%), Williams Lake (98%), and Smithers (96%) had almost exclusively First Nations participants.
  - This distinction-based data may signify that while First Nations people comprise the bulk of the Indigenous population experiencing homelessness, service approaches must also

[1] Note some of this data may be updated as BC Housing releases the Provincial Report in early 2026.

consider Métis and Inuit (e.g. 4% of Comox Valley's Indigenous homeless population were Inuit).

- **Indigenous individuals are more likely to be unsheltered than non-Indigenous individuals in many counts.**
    - In Dawson Creek, 84% of Indigenous respondents were unsheltered versus 40% of non-Indigenous respondents. Similar gaps appeared in Campbell River (76% vs 69% unsheltered), Port Alberni (83% vs 77%), Squamish (95% vs 76%), Terrace (54% vs 40%). Smithers and Parksville had a vast majority of Indigenous and non-Indigenous respondents unsheltered.
    - These differences may point to barriers Indigenous people face in accessing shelter in certain communities whether due to capacity/availability, personal safety and cultural safety, or discrimination.
    - Note that "Unsheltered homelessness" includes those who stayed outside in alleys, doorways, parkades, parks and vehicles or couch surfing, a hotel without a place to return to, or with their parents in a temporary situation on the night of the Count.

- **Indigenous respondents are more likely to experience long-term or chronic homelessness in many communities.**
    - In many communities the percentage of Indigenous respondents who were homeless for over a year exceeded that of non-Indigenous. For example, in Penticton, 87% of Indigenous respondents had been homeless for over 1 year, compared to 76% of non-Indigenous respondents. In Prince Rupert, it was 76% vs 57%. And in Sechelt, 95% of Indigenous respondents had been without housing for over a year, vs 69% of others.

- **A few communities stand out for higher senior homelessness among Indigenous respondents.**
    - Kitimat (44%) and Salmon Arm (39%) had the highest percentages of Indigenous senior respondents, followed by Parksville/Qualicum (27%), Powell River (25%); Prince Rupert (25%) and Campbell River (24%).
    - A few communities had both high percentages overall, and in comparison to non-Indigenous respondents: Merritt 22% vs 12 % non-Indigenous; Squamish 30% vs 18% non-Indigenous; Williams Lake 33% vs 20% non-Indigenous.

- **There is a significant proportion of Indigenous youth in many communities.**
    - All of Prince Rupert's homeless youth were Indigenous: 30% of Indigenous respondents were youth (under 25), whereas no non-Indigenous youth were counted.
    - Other areas with high Indigenous youth representation include Campbell River (16%), Comox Valley (23% v. 6% non-Indig.), Merritt (15%), Penticton (19%), Smithers (8% of Indigenous respondents were youth, vs 0 non-Ind) and Sechelt (4% Indigenous youth vs 2%).
    - Dawson Creek, Kitimat, Parksville/Qualicum and Salmon Arm reported 0 Indigenous youth respondents.

- Significantly, in Powell River, 22% of respondents overall reported “conflict with a parent/guardian” as the reason for most recent housing loss.

- **In every count, Indigenous respondents were far more likely to have been in foster care, reflecting how child welfare interventions have disproportionately impacted Indigenous families and are linked to later homelessness.**
  - This disparity is shockingly clear. In Campbell River, 63% of Indigenous homeless respondents reported having been in foster care as a youth, compared to 42% of non-Indigenous respondents. Similar disparities were found in every single community where this data was collected. For example, Cranbrook (58% of Ind. vs 18% of non-Ind.), Comox Valley (46% vs. 21%), Dawson Creek (36% vs 7%), Kitimat (41% vs 8%), Merritt (62% vs 30%), Parksville (29% vs 12%), Penticton (54% vs 30%), Port Alberni (53% vs 18%), Terrace (52% vs 5%), Sechelt (57% vs 17%), and Vernon (48% vs 24%).
  - Even in communities where the overall foster-care history was lower, Indigenous rates were still higher (e.g. Powell River: 33% Ind. vs 29% non-Ind.).

- **Indigenous women are often a larger proportion of the homeless population relative to non-Indigenous women**.
  - In most communities, Indigenous women were disproportionately represented relative to non-Indigenous women. In Vernon, Indigenous respondents were 49% women, whereas among non-Indigenous respondents, only 32% were female. Similar disparities were captured in Campbell River (45% Indigenous women vs 28% non-Indigenous) Williams Lake (44% vs 29%) and Squamish (45% vs 35%), Comox Valley (42% vs 34%), Fort St John (56% vs 44%), Kitimat (40% vs 35%), Penticton (46% vs 40%), Powell River, (36% vs 30%).
  - In Fort St. John, Indigenous women outnumbered Indigenous men (56% Indigenous women), even though men were half of the overall homeless count. Smithers similarly indicated that nearly half of Indigenous respondents were women. Prince Rupert (46%), Port Alberni and Quesnel (both 42%), Terrace (43%), Williams Lake (44%), Vernon (49%), and Campbell River (45%) also reported a high Indigenous female representation among respondents.
  - These examples suggest that Indigenous women may face disproportionately high risks of homelessness and underscore the importance of gender-responsive and culturally safe support.

- **Transgender and 2SLGBQQIA+ representation in the homeless counts shows variability and some data inconsistencies.**
  - In 2025, many communities reported 0% (or did not report) 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals in 2025, despite having had some representation in earlier years. For instance, Dawson Creek had 9% of respondents identify as LGBTQ2+ in 2023, but 0% in 2025; Salmon Arm reported ~6% respondents with transgender experience in 2023 then 0% in 2025. Kitimat reported 19% 2SLGBTQQIA+ in 2023 and 9% in 2025, with zero respondents identifying transgender experience.

- Such sudden absences likely reflect data collection issues or small sample sizes rather than true elimination of those populations. Stigma and privacy concerns can lead to under-disclosure of gender identity and sexual orientation in these surveys.
- It may be important to advocate for future counts to improve engagement with 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals (for example, by involving peer researchers and creating safer survey environments), as this can impact service planning for shelters and supports that are affirming of gender and sexual diversity.
- Higher 2SLGBQQA+ populations were recorded in Campbell River (14%), Comox Valley (16%), Cranbrook (10%), Fort St John (11%), Penticton (15%), Powell River (18%), and Prince Rupert (16%). This indicator is not Indigenous specific.
- Indigenous respondents in Cranbrook: 5% reported another gender vs 0% non Indigenous, plus and overall 10% 2SLGBQQIA+ percentage; Parksville reported 9% Another Gender for Indigenous respondents and 0% for non-Indigenous. Penticton, Salmon Arm, Sechelt, and Prince Rupert had similar disparities.

- **Substance use remains the most reported health concern across all respondents:**
  - Quesnel (88%), Chilliwack (84%), Kelowna (83%), Kamloops (81%), and Powell River (81%) lead the ranking.
  - Mental health was the second most-reported health concern across all respondents: Penticton (87%), Comox Valley (83%), Kitimat (83%), Quesnel (81%), and Salmon Arm (81%) lead the ranking.
  - Other reported health concerns include: Grief, illness, chronic condition, physical mobility, physical disability, medical condition, cognitive impairment, senses, and learning disability: Physical disability was the third most commonly reported health concern in Chilliwack. Grief ranked third in Kelowna. Issues related to the senses were the third most reported health concern in both Powell River and Prince Rupert.
  - Victoria is the city with the most cases of reported brain injury (40%): Followed by Penticton, Powell River, Chilliwack, and Kamloops.

- **When asked about the primary reasons for their last housing loss, respondents in 2025 most commonly cited economic factors. In nearly every community, "Not enough income" was the top reason given.**
  - Economic issues ("not enough income") dominated the responses in 2025, even more than in past years. This likely reflects the worsening affordability crisis where rents and living costs have surged, outpacing incomes (especially income assistance rates).
  - Many respondents in 2025 reported some income or jobs, but still couldn't afford housing. The prevalence of poverty identified as the root cause underscores that homelessness in BC is increasingly about the lack of affordable housing and adequate income support. Substance use and mental health are still critical factors, but those challenges often intersect with poverty and housing unaffordability.

- **Several communities showed high rates of conflict or violence as the reason for housing loss.**

- Kitimat reported that 34% of respondents had experienced abuse by a spouse or partner as a cause of losing their housing (one of the highest GBV indicators in the data). Fort St. John similarly saw 27% citing abuse by spouse/partner as a cause.
- "Conflict with spouse/partner" was among the top 2-3 causes in Sechelt (20%) and Squamish (17%), Campbell River (17%), Parksville (23%), Smithers (24%), Terrace (29%), Vernon (25%), Victoria (13%).

- **In some communities Indigenous people reported much higher eviction rates but this was not consistent across the province.**
  - In Comox Valley (2025), 65% of Indigenous respondents said their most recent housing loss was due to eviction, compared to 46% of non-Indigenous. Prince Rupert had 42% of Indigenous respondents reporting eviction, versus only 7% of non-Indigenous.

- **The data indicates that the majority of people experiencing homelessness are on some form of income assistance or government benefit, yet still remain homeless. This highlights a gap between income assistance levels and actual housing costs.**
  - In many communities, 75–90% of respondents reported receiving Income Assistance (IA), disability benefits, or similar.
  - Most people counted are already accessing the minimal income supports available, but those supports (welfare rates around $750/month for a single person) are far below market rent levels, so people cannot secure or maintain housing even with that income.
  - In some communities, the percentage of Indigenous respondents on income assistance is lower than non-Indigenous respondents. For instance, in Kitimat only 43% of Indigenous respondents were on income assistance, compared to 75% of non-Indigenous, suggesting that over half of Indigenous respondents there had no formal income support at all. Parksville showed a similar trend (only 71% of Indigenous vs 84% of non-Indigenous on IA), and Prince Rupert had relatively low uptake overall (66% of Indigenous, 53% of non-Indigenous). These could be red flags that Indigenous people are falling through the cracks of the social safety net in some areas, perhaps due to barriers in accessing assistance, lack of identification, mistrust of systems, or reliance on informal/community support. It represents a potential intervention point.
  - There are communities where nearly every Indigenous respondent is on assistance: Cranbrook reported 95% of Indigenous respondents on IA, Merritt 89%, Quesnel 92%, etc. Essentially the entire population of Indigenous respondents is already connected to assistance programs, yet they still cannot afford a home. It underlines calls from AHMA and others that income assistance rates are simply too low to avoid homelessness, especially given many on assistance face additional challenges (health, trauma) and discrimination in the housing market.

Considering this preliminary analysis, AHMA could begin to focus on the following areas:

1. Advocate for increased income assistance and disability assistance rates to reflect the fact that not enough income is a major driver for entry in homelessness.

2. Ensure providers in Prince Rupert, Kitimat and Parksville have adequate outreach and supports to connect Indigenous people with Income Supports and Disability Assistance. Connect with MSDPR on these reported gaps.
3. Indigenous-led homelessness-focused projects in Prince Rupert, Smithers, Williams Lake, Kitimat and Merritt due to the exceedingly high Indigenous proportion of respondents. Including access to shelter, transitional housing, outreach services, culturally supportive and safe services and supports.
4. Focus on increasing shelter and housing access in Cranbrook, Dawson Creek, Campbell River, Port Alberni, Squamish, Powell River, Terrace, Smithers, Vernon and Parksville due to high levels of unsheltered Indigenous respondents.
5. Continue working with health partners to ensure that health supports for those struggling with substance use and mental health issues are available and embedded into all housing and services for those experiencing homelessness across the province.
6. Indigenous-led projects specifically for Indigenous seniors in Kitimat, Salmon Arm, and Williams Lake to respond to high rates of senior homelessness in these regions.
7. Indigenous-led projects specifically for women in Campbell River, Fort St John, Kitimat, Prince Rupert, Williams Lake, and Vernon to respond to high rates of homelessness for this demographic.
8. Kitimat, Fort St John, Smithers, Terrace, and Vernon reported high rates of conflict or abuse by a spouse/partner as a reason for housing loss and should be considered as communities needing intervention for those fleeing domestic violence.
9. Indigenous-led projects and services specifically for youth in Courtenay, Prince Rupert, Penticton and Merritt due to a high proportion of youth experiencing homelessness in those regions.
10. Continue advocating for more supports for Indigenous youth aging out of care. The 2025 PiT Count data shows a clear overrepresentation province-wide.
11. Advocate for 2SLGBTQQIA+ specific services in Campbell River, Comox Valley, Cranbrook, Fort St John, Penticton, Powell River, and Prince Rupert.
12. Advocate for evaluation or potential changes to the PiT Count methodology in areas reporting zero Indigenous youth: Dawson Creek, Kitimat, Parksville/Qualicum and Salmon Arm; and zero 2SLGBTQQIA+: Dawson Creek, Kitimat, Salmon Arm and Terrace.